

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Legislation and
National Security Subcommittee,
Committee on Government Operations,
House of Representatives

April 1993

U.S. CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Better Management Needed for Mobilization Support



**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-252454

April 29, 1993

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Chairman, Legislation and National
Security Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As requested, we have reviewed the mobilization support function of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Specifically, we determined whether the Corps' mobilization support planning is consistent with the types of conflicts U.S. forces are likely to face in the future. We also sought to assess the Corps' readiness to perform its mobilization support mission.

Results in Brief

The Corps has begun modifying its plans for mobilization support activities to include regionally based conflicts like the Persian Gulf War, but key planning guidance remains focused on the full mobilization of forces for global war. The Corps has not established a timetable for revising this guidance and does not expect to make any revisions until after it has completed a study of its future support program for natural disasters and national security emergencies. The Corps also has not determined its personnel requirements for conflicts involving less than full mobilization.

Corps readiness to support mobilization is uncertain. Readiness evaluations are not based on objective standards and exclude overseas activities. In addition, the Corps has failed to follow up on identified deficiencies.

Background

A fundamental Corps mission is to provide support for military mobilization. Support activities include engineering, design, construction, and contract management services. Mobilization support is part of the Corps' support program for natural disasters and national security emergencies. The Corps generally does not participate in tactical or combat missions; rather, the Army relies upon active and reserve component engineering companies, battalions, and division-level combat engineers for battlefield construction.

The Corps is also involved in a broad range of civil works, including dams, locks, and other water projects, and military design and construction activities. Corps plans call for shifting its employees to military support projects if extensive mobilization support is needed.

The Corps is organized into 52 field offices—13 division offices and 39 district offices—located throughout the United States and in Germany, Japan, and Korea. According to Corps officials, approximately 800 of its 39,000 employees are active duty military personnel, who generally occupy leadership positions.

A cadre of about 250 full-time staff manage the support program for both natural disasters and national security emergencies. At Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., the Readiness Branch of the Operations, Construction, and Readiness Division is responsible for developing emergency management guidance, plans, budgets, exercises, and evaluations, and for overseeing the support program.

Mobilization support is funded from a number of military and civil programs. According to Corps officials, the Corps received about \$9.5 million for mobilization support out of a total of about \$10.7 billion for its military and civil programs in fiscal year 1992. It also received \$300 million under contracts with foreign governments and \$400 million from other non-defense U.S. government agencies.

Corps Has Focused on a Global War Scenario

The Corps has based its mobilization support planning on a full mobilization of forces to respond to the threat of a global war. In this scenario, the plans anticipate that vast construction would be needed to expand Army installations in the United States so they can handle a large influx of troops.

To ensure adequate support for full mobilization, the Corps of Engineers has been responsible for assisting Army commands and installations in developing mobilization master plans that identify likely installation improvements, such as the expansion of troop and administrative facilities, the development of infrastructure, and the lease or purchase of real property. About 100 master plans had been completed as of February 1992. The Corps also has been responsible for preparing engineering design and construction plans called for in the master plans. For example, a master plan might call for site adaptations to the standard

barracks design so that construction could begin immediately if U.S. forces are mobilized.

Persian Gulf War Demonstrated How Mobilization Support Requirements Differ in a Regional Conflict

The Corps' support to the Army and to the rest of the Department of Defense since World War II has differed significantly from that outlined under full mobilization plans. These differences were demonstrated most recently in the U.S. military buildup during the Persian Gulf War, the largest mobilization of U.S. reserve troops since World War II. For example:

- To accommodate troop buildup and deployment to the Persian Gulf, little expansion or construction of facilities was needed at military bases within the United States. A Corps official said that Corps mobilization support in the United States was limited largely to conducting special research on such matters as the use of satellites for water studies and mapping, computer programs for use in facility planning, and dust control studies to protect helicopters.
- The Corps filled an overseas, in-theater support role for the first time. In contrast to prior conflicts in which the Corps provided overseas support before the onset of hostilities or after hostilities ceased, the Corps supported overseas commands both during the troop buildup and during the war. The Army used Corps personnel for real estate services, such as leasing offices and land; legal assistance in interactions with the Saudi Arabian government and citizens; contracting assistance for supplies and transportation; and supervision of the design and construction of military base camps.
- The Corps' mobilization support role in the Gulf war involved relatively few Corps personnel. Corps officials told us that the total number of personnel used in-theater was less than 300, with generally fewer than 100 serving at any one time. The number of back-up personnel in the United States was about 100 throughout the war, with no more than 40 at any one time, a Corps official said.

The U.S. military engagement in the Persian Gulf was similar to other post-World War II engagements in that it did not require the full mobilization of U.S. troops and consequently, did not require an extensive buildup of military bases in the United States. According to a Corps historian, during the Korean War existing stateside facilities were generally adequate to meet the Army's needs. He said that during the Vietnam War, the gradual buildup limited stateside construction. More recently, in the relatively brief invasions of Panama and Grenada, the

Corps' role principally related to damage assessment and recovery activities in the theater of operations once hostilities ceased.

Army planners and national security documents, such as the National Military Strategy of the United States (Jan. 1992) prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicate that future military actions will likely be similar in scope to the recent short-term conflicts in the Persian Gulf and Central America. The Army, consequently, is revising its mobilization strategy. Army planners believe future troop mobilizations will involve a smaller and more rapidly deploying force than that required for a full mobilization under the global war scenario. Just a few U.S. installations are expected to be involved at the onset of a regional conflict, with the number of installations expanding if and when the conflict escalates. Other important factors in the Army's mobilization strategy are the reductions in U.S. forces and the closing of military facilities worldwide.

Corps Has Not Revised Key Guidance on Preparing for Regional Conflicts

Corps officials acknowledge that their mobilization support planning should reflect reactions to regional conflicts, and they have taken several steps in this direction.

- In April 1992, the Corps held a special conference to discuss needed changes in Corps mobilization support. Discussion included changes in likely Army war scenarios and the increased need to coordinate support with commanders in chief of overseas in-theater operations.
- In June 1992, the Corps directed field offices supporting mobilization master planning at Army installations to include plans for supporting scenarios involving smaller, rapidly deploying forces. A Corps planner said that this updated guidance replaces the Corps' 1988 technical manual requiring planning under full mobilization instructions.
- The Corps has begun a study of the future support program for natural disasters and national security emergencies. The study is scheduled for completion in July 1993.
- Since the Persian Gulf war, the Readiness Branch has begun to incorporate newly identified overseas support responsibilities into its mobilization planning system. The Corps began a program to contract in advance for initial in-theater services. According to a Corps official, such services might include troop stationing, storage of supplies, and transportation from overseas ports to basing areas. Corps officials said that the agency has sought and obtained additional funding to develop plans to support overseas commands. According to a Corps official, the Corps also has hired an international management firm to develop

(1) a worldwide management plan on how it would provide contract construction and logistic support to the military overseas and
(2) 13 country-specific plans in conjunction with the Army's overseas commands.¹

Despite these initiatives, the Corps' primary mobilization support planning guidance—the Mobilization and Operations Planning System—remains focused on full mobilization requirements. This guidance identifies mobilization support responsibilities, details how field offices should plan their mobilization support activities, and outlines how the transition operations to mobilization should occur.

Corps officials indicated that they have not established a timetable for revising the Mobilization and Operations Planning System. Officials said it will not be revised until after they have completed their study of the future support program for natural disasters and national security emergencies in July 1993. Without this planning guidance, field officials told us that it is difficult to update their mobilization operations plans.

Although the Army is still assessing its future mobilization strategy, we determined that four Corps divisions are likely to be most critical in future mobilizations for regional conflicts. These are as follows:

- The South Atlantic Division, which supports 11 mobilization stations, 7 ocean terminals, and the U.S. Southern Command. The Southern Command's area of responsibility is Central and South America.
- The TransAtlantic Division, which supports the U.S. European Command and the U.S. Central Command. These two commands' areas of responsibility are Europe and the Middle East and Africa.
- The Pacific Ocean Division, which supports the U.S. Pacific Command and its sub-unified commands and service elements, such as the U.S. Army of the Pacific, and U.S. Forces Korea and Japan. The Pacific Command's areas of responsibility are Asia, Alaska, and land touched by the Pacific Ocean.
- The North Central Division, which, according to an Army official, provides program management for mobilization master planning at the Army Material Command's arsenals, proving grounds, and supply depots.

The Corps also has not revised its personnel requirements. Current mobilization support plans designate a role for all 39,000 Corps personnel.

¹U.S. Army Southern Command and U.S. Army Europe each identified five countries, and U.S. Army of the Pacific identified three countries.

Changes in these plans have important implications for the Corps' personnel requirements. For example, the total number of people who need mobilization training and the amount of logistics support the Corps will require under a partial mobilization will depend on the number of personnel needed to support likely future scenarios. Supporting a partial mobilization or a mobilization for a regional conflict will likely require much fewer Corps staff than a full mobilization. Corps officials said they had not determined personnel requirements for conflicts involving less than full mobilization.

Actions to Improve Readiness

The Corps, responding in part to criticism that it was unprepared to fully support a military mobilization, has undertaken a series of actions to improve its readiness. Poor performance during a 1978 mobilization exercise and internal studies of Corps mobilization preparedness raised Corps concerns about insufficient and fragmented emergency management in the field. The Corps consequently consolidated emergency management efforts under a single office at each division and district by establishing offices of emergency management in 1980. Emergency management staff were assigned responsibility for jointly managing both national security and civil emergency preparedness missions.

After further internal studies in 1981 to 1984 indicated continued mobilization support preparedness problems, such as an inadequate emphasis on mobilization and training, the Corps initiated two programs to improve performance: a corrective action program to identify and resolve mobilization preparedness deficiencies and a readiness evaluation system to assess preparedness for national emergencies, which includes mobilization support.

- The Corps of Engineers Corrective Action Program (CECAP), established in 1986, provides a control system and management process for identifying, evaluating, and resolving issues that affect the Corps' ability to carry out its national security emergency support mission, particularly support for mobilization. CECAP is intended primarily for use following exercises testing national security preparedness, but does not preclude any Corps or Army organization from submitting other mobilization-related deficiencies to the program. If a headquarters steering committee agrees corrective action is required, it assigns staff responsibility for resolution. The committee must meet and issue resolution progress reports twice a year.
- The Corps of Engineers Readiness Evaluation System (CERES), established in 1987, is intended to provide Corps headquarters with information on

field readiness, as well as information to local commanders on critical weaknesses needing attention.² The CERES assessment questionnaire focuses on six performance areas: sufficiency of resources, logistics, plans and manuals, inter-agency coordination, exercise participation, and personnel and training. Field offices reporting that their status is less than fully ready are requested to report the reasons for the deficiencies.

Corps officials informed us that the Corps established a readiness board in 1992 to better coordinate civil and military emergency efforts and provide emphasis on readiness at headquarters.

Readiness Is Uncertain

Between 1987 and 1991, 8 of the 11 divisions we reviewed reported a marginally ready status for at least 3 of the 5 years. In 4 of the last 5 years, more than half the divisions reported they were marginally ready. However, the significance of these data is unclear because readiness evaluations are not based on objective standards and do not extend to overseas support activities. In addition, headquarters oversight has been inadequate to ensure that corrective action is taken when readiness deficiencies are identified.

Reliability of Evaluation Program Is Questionable

CERES does not provide specific objectives against which a unit can accurately determine its performance. For example, the assessment questionnaire asks if the field office's funding allocation supports an emergency training program, but it does not specify the minimum requirements of such a program. Similarly, the questionnaire asks if the office has established a mobilization personnel plan with "sufficient" personnel to perform "essential" tasks, but it does not define these terms.

This lack of clear criteria raises the potential for subjective judgments that give management little useful information about how ready units actually are. For example, in 1991 the South Atlantic Division, which had filled all eight of its authorized full-time staff positions in its emergency management office, rated itself "unready" in the area of resource support, mainly because it lacked authorization for one additional full-time person. The North Pacific Division also rated itself as unready and cited a relatively large staffing shortfall. When we visited, North Pacific's emergency management office had only two of six authorized full-time staff and had no permanently assigned emergency management chief for

²The Corps of Engineers reports readiness in accordance with Engineering Regulation 500-1-21. The Corps is not required to comply with Army Regulation 220-1 on unit status reporting as are active and reserve component combat units.

almost 2 years. The Corps' evaluation system does not adequately disclose the differences between these two programs.

Field emergency managers have questioned the objectivity of the assessments at a Corps-wide national security emergency program conference in 1988 and in their annual CERES submissions. They have generally criticized the system for allowing offices to rate their performance subjectively.

CERES has a second problem limiting its usefulness in that it excludes the Corps' overseas mobilization support activities. It has been used to assess the Corps' readiness to support U.S.-based installations during a full mobilization. However, it has not been used to assess the Corps' support of overseas commands.

For example, officials of the Honolulu-based Pacific Ocean Division told us that the division has limited mobilization support responsibilities in the United States but that since 1979 it has had relatively significant overseas support responsibilities to the U.S. Pacific Command. Thus, Pacific Ocean's ability to support the mobilization needs of U.S.-based Army commands is not as critical as its ability to support mobilization for overseas commands. Nevertheless, only its ability to support U.S.-based mobilization is measured. Although Pacific Ocean officials believe they are ready for overseas command wartime support, this is not reflected in the CERES evaluation for the division.

Headquarters Oversight Is Inadequate

Corps headquarters' oversight of mobilization activities has been inadequate in following up with field offices on readiness deficiencies and prescribing corrective action. Corps headquarters does not generally follow up with poorly performing or non-reporting divisions. For example, an emergency management official we interviewed said his division prepared but did not submit a 1990 readiness report to headquarters. The report showed the division was marginally ready for a national security emergency. The official said he was not contacted about the division's failure to submit the report. Another example is that although 69 percent of the units reporting that were marginally ready commented in the 1991 CERES evaluation about the lack of program funding for national emergency support activities (making it the deficiency cited most often as hindering unit readiness), headquarters officials said that they did not follow up with units on their funding difficulties. The same deficiency was noted in prior-year evaluations.

Field officials have noted and reported readiness deficiencies in CERES but report they are unable to correct many of them. For example, the Missouri River Division reported mobilization preparedness deficiencies in 1991 but explained in its readiness assessment submission that it could not update mobilization support plans or make other program changes because it lacked staffing, funding, and sufficient planning guidance from Corps headquarters. The North Central Division reported similar deficiencies for similar reasons but had no planned corrective action. Corps headquarters has not assisted the field offices in resolving deficiencies such as these.

This lack of oversight appears likely to continue into the immediate future. Headquarters officials said that following up on readiness assessments is important to ensure corrective actions are taken but that they do not do so because of a shortage of staff.

CECAP is designed to provide for systematic follow-up of deficiencies and for corrective action. However, Corps officials told us that the CERES program, which identifies field-level deficiencies, and CECAP have traditionally operated independently of one another. They said that there has been no attempt to link the two programs through, for example, requiring submission to CECAP of recurring deficiencies identified in CERES.

Recommendations

To enhance the ability of the Army Corps of Engineers to provide effective mobilization support to U.S. forces, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to

- establish a timetable for revising key planning guidance, including personnel requirements, so that it is consistent with mobilization scenarios for regional conflicts;
- revise the readiness evaluation system to (1) use objective standards and (2) include overseas support activities; and
- include continuing deficiencies reported under the evaluation system in the corrective action program.

Agency Comments

As requested, we did not obtain fully coordinated Department of Defense comments on this report. However, we discussed our findings with officials from the Corps' Readiness Branch and its Civil Works and Military directorates. Corps officials told us that while they need to plan for regional conflicts, they should continue to plan for full mobilization as

well. Corps officials agreed with our criticisms of the readiness evaluation and follow-up programs.

Scope and Methodology

To perform our review, we examined pertinent laws, regulations, and agency guidance relating to the Corps' mobilization support program. We also examined U.S. national security policy documents, studies of mobilization support activities, Corps mobilization exercise manuals, and annual assessments of field national security emergency activities. We interviewed emergency program managers at Corps headquarters to discuss the Corps' emergency management program, the Corps' role in military mobilizations, and recent Corps efforts to reassess its mobilization support requirements.

We included 11 of the Corps' 13 divisions in our review. The Huntsville Division was excluded because, according to a Corps official, it is a specialty division. The TransAtlantic Division was also excluded because an official said it was established in fiscal year 1991, it had limited readiness evaluation data, and the Corps did not compare it with other divisions.

We conducted detailed work at three divisions—South Atlantic in Atlanta, Georgia; North Pacific in Portland, Oregon; and Pacific Ocean in Honolulu, Hawaii. According to the chief of the Corps' national security emergency program, these divisions and their subordinate district commands provide direct technical support to some of the Army's most important installations, ports of embarkation, and unified commands. At each division visited, we interviewed key officials and staff members and reviewed historical records on organizational structure, staffing, activities, mobilization plans and manuals, mobilization evaluation data, and funding records. In addition, we reviewed similar information from their 11 subordinate district commands.

We conducted our work between October 1991 and December 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services, the Secretaries of Defense and the Army, the Director of

the Office of Management and Budget, and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others on request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Henry L. Hinton, Jr., who may be reached on (202) 512-4126 if you or your staff have any questions. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,



for
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